

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE# 2004-0102

BAR Meeting
June 16, 2004

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Rolf Marshall
LOCATION: 305 South Union Street
ZONE: RM Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy so that the applicant can propose a replacement design that is more in keeping with the original wood screening.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement railings for the townhouses located at 305, 307, 309 and 311 South Union Street. The original wood railings were destroyed by Hurricane Isabel in September 2003.

The applicant is proposing to install 36" high metal railings attached to the existing 16" high brick wall. The applicant is also proposing to replace the existing wood railings for the balconies at 305 and 309 South Union Street with new metal railings.

II. HISTORY:

The residential townhomes at Waterford Place were constructed in 1980, according to the Tax Assessors records, in a variety of traditional, eclectic styles. The Union Street elevation at grade is primarily composed of garage doors with terraces above.

In 1993, the Board approved light fixtures for 307, 311, & 317 South Union Street & 100 Duke Street (BAR Case #93-11, 1/19/03.)

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

Although constructed in the late 20th century, the design of these townhouses was approved by the Board. The original design intent for this row on the 300 block of South Union Street called for a uniform appearance through the use of materials and repeating patterns. Four of the five townhouses in this row are proposing to change the existing terrace screening design from a solid wood wall to a more open metal railing. The existing wood screening wall at 313 South Union Street was not damaged by the Hurricane and is not proposed to be replaced.

The original wood screening design unifies the row of townhouses and ties into the first story garage doors as well as the upper level balconies. Staff is concerned by the transition of the existing 30" high solid wood screening at 313 South Union Street to the new 36" high open style metal railings.

Staff also believes that the decorative wood railings on the balconies at 305 and 309 South Union Street are significant architectural features of the townhouses that provide visual interest and therefore should be maintained.

While metal railings are found in other applications in the Waterford Place development, they are not found on the South Union Street elevation of this group. Staff believes the use of wood materials on the South Union Street elevation is significant to the overall design. Staff believes that the replacement railings should be constructed of wood and tie into the existing design at 313 S Union Street.

The applicant has submitted a letter from the Waterford Place Homeowners Association recommending approval of the proposed metal railings. However, the HOA requires that all of the railings in the row match, including 313 South Union Street. Since the owner of 313 South Union Street has not agreed to the new design due to privacy concerns, the HOA has recommended adding “bunting” to the proposed railing. The applicant has submitted information on a Polyethene knitted screening. Staff does not support the use of the proposed mesh screening which appears more appropriate for construction sites than a historic district.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy so that the applicant can propose a replacement design that is more in keeping with the original wood screening.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“Does it matter that unit on the end retains the wood railing? This was originally designed all alike. I prefer the open look of the railing but have trouble with the cohesive design for the entire block face.”